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Revisiting Roman imports beyond the frontier. Investigating processes of movement

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Session Abstract: Finds of Roman objects outside the ancient Roman Empire attracted human attention even before the dawn of archaeological science, and their study has been an important research area even since. Initially, readily-identifiable Roman goods were understood as material evidence of events known from written sources, whereas today we reconstruct numerous – sometimes different, sometimes connected – mechanisms which caused often very heterogeneous distribution patterns of such objects. The causes and contexts of transmission of these items are still extensively discussed, and need to be researched in relation to place, time and context rather than assuming common processes.

On the 70th anniversary of Hans Jürgen Eggers's pioneering book *Der römische Import im freien Germanien*, our session seeks to explore the mechanisms by which Roman objects and ideas moved beyond the frontier. How far was trade a factor, and how was it organised? How can we tell this from other potential processes, such as diplomatic efforts, payment of subsidies, loot, or personal gain from military service? Can we recognise different mechanisms in different times and places, or for different materials? Some regions show indications that Roman objects were valued as raw materials, suggesting an important role of foreign objects as economic resources. Beside the finds themselves, how (and how often) is it possible to confirm the transfer of ideas or techniques? And how did distance affect matters? How did relations across the frontier to the neighbouring zones differ from those with more distant areas?

For the session, papers are welcome which seek to explore the means by which Roman goods and concepts moved beyond the frontier, the ways this changed in time and space, and the implications it had.